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## Justice Now!

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**I**N the course of this Statement a number of principles will be laid down, the observance of which is demanded by social justice.

It is important to understand that the demand of social justice refers to the public authorities who are responsible for shaping the social economy. Their duty is to take those measures that will bring about the conditions that will ennoble the economic system to fulfil its purpose of maintaining life.

But social justice is binding also on the individual members of the community, forbidding them to do anything which interferes with the achievement of the common good.

It is necessary that the seriousness of the obligation imposed by social justice should be realized. When it is said that the right to a family wage is absolute in social justice, too few people realize how personal is the responsibility of an employer who flagrantly infringes that right.

Even the workers whose interests are directly concerned in this matter of the family wage do not fully realize that an employer who pays a wage approximating to it is not doing anything more than he is bound to do.

In paying the family wage an employer is simply giving his workers what belongs to them. He is handling their money, not his own. And just as a person has no right to retain money belonging to another, so no employer, where the industry can really afford to pay the family wage, is entitled to withhold it. By doing so he would be taking possession of money not his own, and his conduct would be equivalent to theft.

This is only an example, and it must not be supposed that social justice or the right to a family wage is confined to one particular class. All men have the right to receive the family wage, irrespective of whether they are industrial workers or not.

In the discussion which follows on the family wage, the word "worker" is used in the sense of all men who must work for a living whether they be industrial workers or not.

The rights which wage-earners enjoy in social justice have their corresponding duties. The Bishops explained these duties in their Statement of 1940.

Workers have their special obligations, such as giving an honest day's work for a fair day's pay, and of using the family wage with prudence and thrift, not squandering it on useless luxuries, but providing for the future, as well as the present, welfare of the members. This requires some self-denial and forethought, which are more easily practised with the help and guidance of religion.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE FAMILY

It is impossible to consider social justice apart from a consideration of the family.

The family is the primary society; it existed before the State and its rights come before those of the State. The State can never enjoy a stable existence unless the family is preserved. All social reform must be judged by the standard of whether it assists the family or not. If it assists it, it is good. If it handicaps it, it is bad.

Social justice demands three things for the family:

(a) Children are to enjoy their father's guidance and

their mother's care. It is a perilous policy for the State to allow those economic circumstances to continue which deprive children of this care and guidance because the mother is forced to work to increase the family income.

(b) The child has the right to physical, intellectual, moral and religious development. The obligation for providing this rests on the parents.

Where the parents cannot undertake in full detail the task of educating their children, they may delegate teachers to do so. The teacher, however, always remains the agent of the parent, and neither the teacher, nor an association of teachers, nor the State can claim rights which run counter to those of the parents.

In matters of education, the State has the duties and rights of protection and control. The State may take measures to ensure that all its citizens receive an adequate education. It should do this by supporting, regulating and supplementing private initiative. It should not become a monopolist.

(c) The breadwinner has the right to receive a family wage, so that the security and independence of human life may be ensured.

#### THE RIGHT OF THE WORKER TO A FAMILY WAGE

It is necessary that three guiding principles of Christian social doctrine with regard to the family wage should be stated clearly at the beginning:—

The worker is entitled in justice to the family wage. In his last great Encyclical on the social question, Pius XI declared that "Social Justice cannot be said to have been satisfied as long as workingmen are denied a salary that will enable them to secure proper sustenance for themselves and for their families."

In the same Encyclical the late Pope stressed that it was Justice and not Charity which demanded that workers be paid a family wage. In paying the family wage, the

employer is giving to the workers money which justly belongs to them; he is not simply being generous with his own money. In withholding the family wage, when he can afford to pay it, he is retaining money which belongs to someone else. That is theft.

"From this it follows," wrote Pius XI, "that a 'charity' which deprives the workingman of the salary to which he has a strict title in justice is not charity at all, but only its empty name and hollow semblance. The wage-earner is not to receive as alms what is his due in justice. And let no one attempt with trifling charitable donations to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by justice."

The payment of the family wage is a first charge on industry. After the employer has obtained a family wage for himself the worker is entitled to the payment of a family wage—that is a sufficient wage to ensure a proper livelihood for himself and his family—before any profits accrue to the employer.

The payment of a family wage is a charge on the industry concerned rather than the State. It is not just to demand wages so high that an employer cannot pay them without ruin. But at the same time, if the business makes smaller profits on account of bad management, want of enterprise, or out-of-date methods, this is not a just reason for reducing the worker's wages below the family level. Neither is it just for industry to pass its responsibility to pay the family wage on to the State, unless it is quite impossible for industry to bear this responsibility.

If such an industry, despite the fact that it finds it impossible to pay the family wage to workers, must be kept in existence by reason of national policy, then there is obviously a duty on the State to make up the difference between the wages which the industry can afford to pay and the family wage which the workers in the industry are entitled to in justice.

**JUSTICE DEMANDS THE FAMILY WAGE**

When it is stated that the worker is entitled, in justice, to a **FAMILY WAGE**, it is most important to understand what things are included, according to Christian principles, in the wage to which the worker is entitled.

A worker cannot be said to be receiving the family wage unless the amount which he receives enables him to:

- (a) secure proper sustenance for himself and for his family;
- (b) have the opportunity of acquiring a moderate amount of property for himself, so that he will not be entirely dependent on his wages;
- (c) make suitable provision, through public or private insurance, for old age, for periods of illness, and unemployment;
- (d) improve the cultural condition in which he and his family live.

The family wage as defined by His Holiness the late Pope Pius XI is clearly a wage which includes more than the simple "needs" of a family when these are interpreted as meaning enough to obtain food, clothing, shelter.

**THE FAMILY WAGE IS A FIRST CHARGE ON INDUSTRY**

Were industry to be operating on proper Christian lines, the following would seem to be the method of fixing the family wage:

1. The standard of the basic wage would be that of a single man. This would cover his essential needs of food, clothing, and shelter; it would provide a modest amount of recreation, and enable him to save for marriage.

2. On his marriage, the worker would be given an increase in wages to provide now for his wife in addition to himself, and to provide also for savings in anticipation

of the expense of the birth of a child. He would also be given a bonus to enable him to purchase in part his house and furniture.

3. On the birth of each child, he would be given an added weekly payment to cover the cost of his dependent children.

4. The money for these payments should come primarily from the industry concerned, which should establish an equalization fund out of which the payment could be made. If the funds of the industry were not sufficient to enable these payments to be made, they should be supplemented from the public revenues.

Obviously such a method of fixing the family wage would operate most easily when industry would be organized into those vocational groupings which as Pius XI says "should be the aim of social legislation." In the organization of industry at the present moment it would be fraught with many difficulties.

It has already been stated that after the employer has himself received a family wage, he is bound in justice to pay the family wage to all of his employes before any profit can be taken out of the industry for himself.

This principle is easy to apply in those cases where the employer is one man and the business is a private concern. It is more difficult of application in those large-scale industries, which are becoming more and more typical of the economic system, where the employer is not a private individual but a public company.

Nevertheless, although greater difficulty will be encountered in fixing the rights and responsibilities of the different individuals who draw profit from the company, the principle itself remains the same and must be observed if gross injustice is not to be inflicted upon the workers.

Accordingly, directors and other executives of the industry, as well as shareholders who receive an income from the profits of these industries, are bound to observe this requirement in justice, that after they themselves

have received a family wage from their enterprise, they have no claim to profit until the workers in the industry have already received a family wage themselves.

It is common today for large shareholders to draw dividends from more than one enterprise. Although social justice does not impose an obligation by which a flourishing industry must contribute to a poor industry, so that the workers in the latter can receive the family wage, social charity may impose an equally binding duty on the large shareholder interested in both.

#### SOCIAL CHARITY OPERATES

A learned and authoritative commentator on the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* has declared that "if the employer has additional other means it . . . may even become a duty to provide the necessities for the worker who has to support a family but cannot do it for lack of sufficient wage income."

In these days of industrial concentration, when the same men figure on the list of shareholders of numbers of public companies, this is a practical and not simply an academic matter.

We do not maintain that equality of wages in actual terms of money for all men, whether they be directors of an industry or workmen, is an essential of Christian social justice. The family wage will vary according to the station of the different persons concerned, since the financial requirements of men in one position will differ from those of men in another.

It must be emphasized, however, that these differences must be real, and not based on the luxuries which are generally associated with the station in life of the wealthier sections of the community. Furthermore, marginal wages, varying with the nature and difficulty of the work performed by different men, are just and necessary.

### THE BODY WHICH IS LIABLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF A FAMILY WAGE IS PRIMARILY THE INDUSTRY WHICH EMPLOYS THE WORKER CONCERNED

If the industry in which the worker is employed is unable to pay the family wage, the responsibility for the payment of a balance so that the worker may maintain his family according to the standards prescribed rests upon the State, if the State regards it as desirable or necessary that the industry should continue to function.

In both of these cases there is a direct duty upon the State. The primary duty of the State is to ensure that as far as possible an industry pays the family wage to its workers. Failing that, a balance should be paid by the State itself which should raise the money by whatever just means it has at its disposal.

It will be seen that there are at least two methods which might be considered in this respect. Either the State could compel the employers in a particular industry or in industry as a whole to create a fund out of which workers would be paid the balance between the basic wage and the family income to which they are entitled, or the State must pay the balance itself out of public revenue.

Wherever it is practicable the former method is preferable, provided that the smaller employers to whom this added burden would be ruinous are safeguarded, since it attempts to place the charge for the proper maintenance of the worker's family on those who should carry the responsibility—that is, on the industry generally. However, where this involves practical difficulties which might be insuperable, a duty remains on the State to provide for these payments out of its own revenues.

In the present state of the Australian economy, when it is universally acknowledged that the present basic wage imposes heavy disabilities on large families and that it is barely sufficient even for small families of two children, the right of the workers to Child Endowment cannot be denied.

### URGENT RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE

The Federal Government of Australia, in introducing a scheme of Child Endowment, has given recognition to a principle which has won universal support, and it would be an act of injustice of the first magnitude should those forces which place themselves in opposition to this measure of justice for the workers succeed in restricting the benefits of the plan.

The duty of the State is to secure the common good, and to be firm and constant in the pursuit of this objective even against the opposition of those who, for selfish reasons, are unwilling to see justice done to the workers and to their families. The Government has already won just commendation for itself in introducing this measure, and vigilance should be exercised to ensure that the workers receive the fullest benefit from the plan. Failure to do this would be connivance in an act of injustice and would be violating the very purpose for which the Government has been given authority to rule the people of Australia—mainly the common good of that people.

It must be realized that the right of the family to Child Endowment does not depend on the necessity for an increase in the population. This is a result which it is confidently hoped will follow from the granting of Child Endowment, but the right to Child Endowment is founded in the obligation of justice to pay a family wage or its equivalent to those who are possessed of family responsibilities.

### MARRIAGE LOANS

In this respect Marriage Loans must also be considered, for unless earlier marriages can be encouraged by practical methods, the purpose of a plan of Child Endowment, insofar as it is intended to stimulate the growth of population, is liable to be frustrated by late marriages. Owing to the conditions of life in a modern industrial city, marriages are frequently delayed because the

couple concerned cannot find the capital which is necessary to set themselves up in a home.

Loans made by the State to enable couples to surmount this difficulty would be a very practical measure to secure earlier marriages, and if part of the repayments were remitted with the birth of children they would do much to encourage young couples to bring children into the world. Marriage loans have already been instituted in some European countries.

On this matter of Child Endowment one last phase needs to be stressed. Particularly because justice must be given to the breadwinner concerned, but also incidentally because it is necessary if Child Endowment is to serve as a method of increasing the population, the amount of endowment should bear a definite relation to the actual cost of maintaining a child.

#### NOMINAL ENDOWMENT FUTILE

A nominal endowment which does very little to enable the family to meet the real cost of maintaining children will not only fail to secure justice for the family, and fail to encourage the raising of larger families, but will bring the whole idea of Child Endowment to public contempt. It will be no more than a subsidy or a "dole" given as a matter of charity by the State, whereas Child Endowment is today a matter of justice. This is a matter demanding the urgent attention of the Governments of Australia and New Zealand.

#### ENDOWMENT NOT BEYOND CAPACITY OF NATION

It has been said in the past and no doubt it will be said in the future that whatever the method of payment suggested, the family wage is beyond the capacity of the nation to pay.

This is another way of saying that the productivity of the nation has not reached a stage where it can afford

for all its citizens those standards to which Christian principles say that they have a right.

Without making any judgment as to whether sufficient goods are being produced in Australia at the moment to supply all Australians with all the requirements of a family wage, it can certainly be said that a far greater share of these necessities could be distributed to families, especially the families of the working class, than they can obtain at the present moment.

The purpose of the wage-system is to secure a just distribution of goods produced by men. If it fails to do so, it must be scrapped in favor of a system which does.

The great surpluses of food which have accumulated in various spheres over the past few years have given rise to the great scandal of food which has been given to us by Almighty God being allowed to rot, while there are families who do not obtain enough to eat.

So long as this iniquity is allowed to continue, it cannot be maintained that every possible effort is being made to ensure that working class families are given the family wage.

Furthermore, the great productive resources which the modern machine age has given to the nation are often not fully utilized because of the interest of monopolies in keeping the price high by restricting production. "Then only," wrote Pope Pius XI, "will the economic and social organism be soundly established and attain its end, when it secures for all and each those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement and social organization of economic affairs can give."

These two factors operate to prevent the enjoyment of the family wage by working class and farming families. The destruction of food or the restriction of production in the interests of monopolies is a sin crying to heaven for vengeance, and both practices must be eliminated in the cause of the common good.

It must be understood that the wage system is only a

means, a convenient means, by which the workers are enabled to obtain goods with which to maintain their families. It was pointed out by the late Pope Pius XI, in his great Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, that the wage system was not in itself unjust. But this was not to say that it was the only possible system, or the best.

There are other alternative systems by which bread-winners could be given a proper share of the nation's wealth for the maintenance of their families, and if the wage system proves an obstructive force in the way of social justice; Christian principles demand that it should be replaced by some other system which is more in accord with the necessities of justice.

#### SYSTEM STANDS CONDEMNED

As long as there is a surplus of wheat and insufficient bread for large sections of the working population, as long as fruit is allowed to rot on the ground while many sections of the population have not the purchasing power to obtain it, the wage system stands condemned as an ineffective method of giving the workers' families that share in the wealth of the nation to which its productive resources entitles them.

In the face of these defects, it is evident that considerable improvements must be made in the wage system, or else some other and better method must be devised for the welfare of the workers.

In *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI made it clear that efforts to substitute a system whereby the workers were given a share in the profits, the control, and the management of an industry were perfectly in line with Christian doctrine.

The wage system in itself is not unjust. But if its actual working proves incompatible with Social Justice, the cooperative working of industry, giving to the workers an adequate share in the profits, the management and the control of industry may have to be substituted.

### THE WIDER DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY

The earlier part of this Statement has been concerned with the necessity of redistributing the income of the community through the operation of the family wage. It must not be thought, however, that the requirements of Christian social principles are satisfied if the workers are given a sufficient income to provide for the day-to-day needs of their families.

Christian principles just as resolutely demand that the ownership of property be disseminated among the workers. The family wage is not being paid in its entirety unless it comprises a sum which allows workers to acquire ownership of a moderate amount of property.

This principle of the dissemination of ownership was strongly urged by Pope Pius XI and it is notable that in his definition of a family wage he included the provision that the wage should be sufficient to allow the worker to attain to a certain moderate ownership. This factor, which is demanded by the Christian definition of the family wage, is of cardinal importance.

### SLAVERY WITHOUT PROPERTY

It is barely conceivable that the working class as a whole can enjoy that independence to which their rights as human beings entitle them if they remain simply wage-earners and are divorced from the ownership of property. Whether the State be Capitalist or Communist, the property-less wage-earner is at the mercy of outside bodies and ultimately of the State itself, depending upon them completely for his own livelihood and that of his family.

The dangers of this condition have not been sufficiently emphasized, for it is the deprivation of property, even more than the insufficiency of wages, which constitutes the major social injustice visited on the vast mass of workers in the modern world. In this social aspect the

development of the industrial system has been unreservedly bad; for the class of independent owners who were the backbone of medieval Europe and England has largely disappeared.

#### UNCHRISTIAN SOCIAL ORDER BREEDS REVOLUTION

It is impossible to imagine a Christian social order in which there will largely remain only two classes—the few who possess property and the vast majority who do not. Referring to the necessity for allowing wage-earners to attain to property, Pius XI voiced a warning to the world which experience has borne out and which has not yet been sufficiently regarded by Governments. "Unless serious attempts are made, with all energy and without delay, to put these ideas into practice, let nobody persuade himself that the peace and the tranquility of human society can be effectively defended against the forces of revolution!"

It is not too much to say that it is just in so far as the institution of property has vanished from the working classes, who comprise the vast majority of the modern State, that totalitarian ideas have gained ground and totalitarian governments invaded the inviolable rights of human personality.

The worker's right to property does not necessarily mean that he should own a plot of land. Ownership can be in land, or a house, or shares, or any of those things which have a stable value and can be exchanged at will by the possessor. Wherever possible, however, the property should be such that the worker is able to control as well as to own it.

In the Bishops' Statement, which was published last year, the following important declaration was made and emphasized:

This idea (of the family wage) presupposes that it is possible for every household to acquire ownership of its family home without delay. Wise legislation on the lines of a rental-purchase system

enables this to be done, and enables young people to save some funds with a view to the founding of new families of their own. Legislation on the housing question should ensure the possibility of homes sufficiently cheap, roomy and private for decent family life.

### OWNERSHIP OF FAMILY HOME

The ownership of the family home by the family itself is a vital necessity of social justice in the present condition of our countries. Much has been done to tackle the problem of slum conditions by housing programs. Much of that which has been done is worthy of the highest commendation.

There is a tendency, however, in many of these plans, to provide homes which workers can rent only, and which they can never own. These housing plans, which make it impossible for the family to own its own home, are not in line with Christian principles. Not only are they contrary to these principles, but they are breeding grave potential menaces to the safety of the State, as the experience of European countries shows.

### FLATS—AN ABOMINATION

Needless to say, housing plans which would consider masses of flats as suitable homes for workers are an abomination, especially in a country of the size of Australia, where there is no need to restrict the living space of the family. With a system of cheap and rapid transport, the workers can easily be provided with roomy and healthy homes removed from the unhealthy noises and odors of the factory suburbs.

It is clear, therefore, that as a matter of principle the law should favor ownership rather than mere tenancy and that the State, however great the sacrifices required, should furnish every possible facility to enable workers to own their own homes.

### HOMESTEAD FARMS

In all schemes to provide workers with their own homes the aim should be, as far as possible, to provide the workers with property which will be productive as well, so that the family will not be forced to rely completely on the wages received from industry.

Special attention is given here to the plan which has been suggested to the public authorities by the National Catholic Rural Movement, by which workers in industry will be given the opportunity to acquire their own homes on a small acreage, on which the family can produce a good part of its own food supply.

This plan of homestead farms for industrial workers has already been given practical encouragement by the Government of the United States, and it is worthy of the support of the Governments of Australia and New Zealand since it gives to the working-class family an independence and a security which at the moment it does not enjoy.

### AN ORDERED SOCIETY

In the discussion of the family wage, the value of the occupational organization of industry, on the lines suggested by Pius XI, was strongly stressed. In fact, without the ordered self-regulation of industry, it is difficult to see how the payment of the family wage could achieve the objective for which it is paid. Without regulation of prices, the family wage might only be nominal, while the alternative to self-government of industry—the regulation of prices by the State—may easily become the expression of totalitarian tyranny.

### DISTRIBUTION OF FREEDOM

It is too commonly thought that there are only two alternative social systems for a modern state—one based on individualism and class-warfare, the other on totali-

tarianism, in which the State establishes its despotic rule over all sections of society to secure industrial peace.

Both alternatives are destructive of a Christian social order, and in these days, when nations claim to be fighting for the liberty of other peoples, it is most necessary to ensure that the liberties of the people are not themselves lost in the process. It should be remembered that political liberty is likely to prove a delusion unless liberty in the social and economic sphere is preserved as well.

The development of Industrial Councils will ensure that a proper measure of self-government is given to industry, which in turn will secure a greater measure of real independence for the individuals who are concerned with industry.

The Industrial Councils should be composed of representatives of employers and workers, appointed by the employers' associations and the trade unions concerned respectively. Consumers should also be given representation, while the interests of the State, which is concerned with the harmonious cooperation of all sectors of production, should also be safeguarded.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

The function of the Industrial Council would be the general government of the industry over which it operates. Its work would, among other things include:

- (a) The determination of wages and industrial conditions throughout the industry.
- (b) The fixing of prices for goods produced by the industry.
- (c) The fixing of dividends payable from year to year.
- (d) Planning the amount and quality of production from year to year, including the safeguarding of the standard of goods produced.
- (e) Planning employment, social insurance and pensions of workers in the industry.
- (f) Planning the marketing of products.

(g) Controlling the number of enterprises operating in the industry.

(h) Planning technical education and apprenticeship for those who are to work in the industry.

(i) Generally, to have complete control, subordinate alone to the ultimate authority of the State, over the policy and development of the industry concerned.

These Industrial Councils should operate at different stages in the organization of industry. Generally, controlling any particular industry there should be the National Industrial Council, possessing the functions described above. Below this there should be a subordinate Regional Council, and below this still the Local Council, which would carry out the work of administration for the sector in which they are organized.

### THE MIDDLE WAY

There is obviously need for the coordination and control of industry. The anarchy which results from the liberal doctrine of *laissez-faire* has been rejected by all sections of the community. The real danger which we run today is that the State will control departments of the lives of men which it has no right to control. The menace of totalitarianism is not confined to the dictator-ruled countries.

The State is not the only temporal society in which men are to live. Just as the body is made of a number of organs, and just as our bodily life will not be a full one if we are deprived of any bodily organs, such as our tongue or our eyes, so our social life will be stunted if we do not have many other societies in addition to the State. Each of these societies is necessary to perform some special function, exactly as the eye is required to see for the living body, or the stomach to digest for it.

It is an injustice, a grave evil, and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies. This is a

fundamental principle of social philosophy, unshaken and unchangeable, and it retains its full truth today. Of its very nature the true aim of all social activity should be to help individual members of the social body, but never to destroy, or absorb them. (Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno.*)

We must have the society known as the Family for the man and the woman who wish to rear children together; we must have the Church, as the society in which man may prepare for the life to come in the way prescribed by Christ; we must have local councils among those who live in the same area or district. We must have the Industrial Council—that is, the occupational body—for those who earn their living in the same calling.

#### SOCIETY'S FULL LIFE

These five societies—the four specified and the State—are as indispensable for healthy social life as the eyes, the heart, and other organs are for a healthy bodily life.

It is the duty of the State to give to the decisions of the Industrial Councils the same legal force as it gives to the local and municipal councils which already exist. The Industrial Council, in its turn, will regulate its activity so as to cooperate with the other Industrial Councils to serve the common good of the whole nation. To ensure this, the Industrial Council is finally subject to the authority of the State.

Unrestricted competition has been discarded by most modern States in theory and certainly by all of them in practice. In discarding it, many States have fled to the opposite extreme of totalitarianism, the source of most of the social ills of the twentieth century.

The Christian solution lies in the middle way, of which the Industrial Council is the expression.

The Industrial Council must not be simply the creature of the State. The corporations of Fascist Italy, which are simply instruments of the State, were criticized by Pius XI for this, and should not be the model of social organization in our communities.

To ensure this, the State should not arbitrarily set up Industrial Councils, but should build carefully on those bodies, like Wages Boards and conciliation committees, which are already in existence.

#### CONCLUSION

The crisis which was foreseen by Leo XIII and his successors, and against which they warned statesmen and peoples, has come upon the modern world because their warnings were disregarded.

The situation, however, can still be retrieved. "It is contrary to the Catholic spirit to yield to the pessimism of our age and to resign ourselves helplessly to the present condition of society, as if it were beyond hope."

With the wholehearted collaboration of all Christian men, animated by these Christian principles, the "new order" to which the world aspires will give security and prosperity to all ranks in society.

## Sharecropper or Slavecropper?

ARTHUR W. TERMINIELLO

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**S**EVEN hundred and sixteen thousand sharecroppers' families form the nucleus of farm tenancy in the South. They cultivate—or mutilate—thirty-nine per cent of all the farms of the South. These form the most insecure of all farm tenants and constitute a threat to the security of the nation.

The extreme poverty of this class is responsible for a standard of living which has been called "below any standard of decency." Entire families, usually large ones, live in the single room shacks which dot, and disgrace the highways of the South. Actual cases are known

where children slept under beds for lack of space on the beds, and where families enjoyed their evening meal on a table which had a saddle for a center piece. Sanitation is an unheard of luxury around such dwellings. Furniture consists of a few orange crates standing on end.

Food is unbalanced and unpalatable, consisting for the most part of a basic diet of corn bread and water. Clothing can scarcely be called such for it is insufficient to satisfy the primary and secondary purposes of clothing—to afford protection to the body and maintain self-respect.

Under such conditions it is little wonder that they are chronic sufferers of the diseases peculiar to sharecroppers—hookworm, pellagra, and malaria. And when this abysmal poverty has been the lot of the family for a number of years, they may be expected to lose all ambition and incentive for changing their lots.

An income of ten cents per day can be called nothing but slavery. And yet the survey of Southern cotton plantations revealed the fact that the average annual income for sharecroppers ranged from \$38.00 to \$87.00 per person. An income of \$38.00 means slightly more than ten cents a day. Even in a country which boasts of its freedom, such an income actually means slavery for millions on the lowest rung of the agricultural ladder. If it is allowed to continue it will mean the decadence of civilization in the South. These people form the new rural proletariat of the South. Since they share little of the fruits of their toil, live in conditions below any level of decency, since their freedom is limited to the will of another upon whom they are absolutely dependent, sharecroppers are in reality slavecroppers.

A long list of evils result from this new rural proletariat and make the slavecropping system fertile fields for the spread of Communism, Nazism and other subversive isms. Among them may be listed Lack of Ownership, Deficiency of Credit, Poor Education, Lack

### of Religious Opportunity, Lack of Legal Protection, and Civic Inequality.

In sharecropping the beginning of the season finds the tenant almost without exception destitute. To furnish his share of seed, fertilizer and livestock, to say nothing of food, clothing, medicine and education for his children he must borrow. To borrow, he must go either to his landlord or to an "advance merchant." For security both take a lien on the entire crop. Interest rates, even when the landlord or merchant is honest, are excessive and criminal. The average annual rate for these people is between twenty and fifty per-cent. The proper procedure is for the cropper to present himself at the beginning of the year for enough to carry him through the planting season. He receives his credit on the books of the store, and for this he is charged the legal rate of interest. He is then charged the list price for what he buys which is usually fifty per-cent higher than the cash price. When planting begins he again presents himself for "furnish"—seed and fertilizer. For this he pays list price and the legal rate for a year, although he will pay the note in four months.

As can be imagined, this system lends itself to many dishonest practices. In all cases it is the landlord or advance merchant who keeps the books. The tenant has little redress against unscrupulous practices for he is notoriously lax in his own bookkeeping even if he is not illiterate.

To this cause can be laid a great deal of the lack of initiative of sharecroppers. His attitude is, "Why work harder than necessary. I don't make no more than a livin' nohow." It is almost next to impossible for a cropper ever to own his own farm. And what business could survive which had to pay two or three hundred per-cent interest for operating capital. The end of each year finds the cropper hopelessly in debt and looking forward to another winter of starvation, another year of fruitless work and another year of sickness. His every

thought, word and action is haunted by the ever-present spectre and hopeless debt.

This explains the evil of deficiency of credit with an impossible burden laid heavily upon the sharecropper. However, the South as a whole has never had sufficient capital and credit for the requirements of its industries and farmers. In agriculture both tenant and landlord have felt the effect of credit obtained from private institutions in other parts of the country. Agriculture has been supported but the support has been fatal. The words of Louis XIV are almost axiomatic, "Credit supports agriculture, as the rope supports the hanged."

Among sharecroppers the percentage of illiteracy soars to disgraceful heights. Possibly fifty to sixty percent. Graduating from the second or third grade of elementary school at the age of sixteen is not conducive to bettering the social and economic status of sharecroppers. Yet, this is the lot of the majority. For them the usual seven months school term is shortened by the necessity of helping the family earn its ten cents per day per person. Planting time, chopping time, and picking time finds all children who are able to walk in the fields helping to perpetuate the sharecropper system of peonage. Under the present system of poverty, lack of opportunity and dependence, formal education is not likely to change the conditions for the better. Any hope for improvement must rest upon education in the fields of agriculture and allied industries. Children must be taught to use the land intelligently, to diversify crops, care for domestic animals, seek a better diet and housing, and even to seek recreation at home.

All of this helps also to explain the lack of legal protection. The sharecropper cannot afford it and if lawyers are assigned for them they are often not interested. Many instances can be given from actual records which show the tragic plight of the sharecropper when it comes to legal protection. The case of J. C. Allen of Pike County, Alabama, in 1938, is land mark in pointing out

the injustices which can be inflicted on the helpless cropper.

Lastly we have the lack of religious opportunity. Many of the rural communities are without churches or resident pastors. Certainly an income of ten cents a day does not afford much opportunity for the support of the churches. Yet it cannot be denied that without the assistance of religion it will be more difficult to convince underprivileged and starving croppers of their actual dignity as human beings. Wilson and Branson in their *Church and Landless Men* tell the following story which expresses the attitude of a white Southern tenant with regard to church attendance. "No we don't go to church, and the children don't go to no church nuther. We ain't been here very long; we don't know nobody yit; nobody ain't ast us to go. Besides we ain't got no clothes that's fitten, and no money to put in the hat, and where we kaint pay, we don't go."

Saint Teresa's Village at Bolling, Alabama, three years ago began its experiment in bringing some measure of economic opportunity and social security to some members of the sharecropper type of tenants by means of cooperative living. Its program is based upon the facts uncovered by the Report of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy and on the principles advocated by the National Catholic Rural Life Conference.

## The Quest for Justice

JOHN J. O'CONNOR

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**I**T IS one of the great tragedies of our time that the attainment of justice seems to be an utter impossibility. The more we concentrate attention upon the problem, the more baffling and mysterious it becomes.

The cry for justice was never more agonizing and insistent than today, nor the echoing silence more terrifying. The tradition lives on; but the reality is vanishing from the earth.

The great leaders of mankind, in the long history of the human race, have fought for justice with voice and pen and sword. They have spoken out fearlessly in churches and synagogues, over the radio, in legislative assemblies, in congresses and conventions of merchants and manufacturers, in guilds and trade unions, in every kind of club and association, in fashionable drawing rooms, in middle-class residences, in the hovels of the poor. They have carried the message of justice to countless millions in books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and letters.

Dauntless souls of every class and creed have suffered and toiled to achieve a just social order for themselves and their descendants. Inspired by the vision of a better, more humane world, they have endured imprisonment, torture, banishment, loss of property, cruel persecution. Struggling against terrible odds, they have kept alive the dream and the hope of a new millennium.

The tradition of justice will never die. Justice will continue to find its champions and allies until the end of time. But millions of people today are conscious of a profound feeling of frustration. What have we to show for so much noble effort? Where have we blundered? How has it happened that, in striving for justice, we have somehow achieved only tyranny, oppression and exploitation?

There has never been any dispute about the meaning of justice. More than two thousand years ago Aristotle defined justice as "that virtue of the soul which is distributive according to desert." Centuries later, the Fathers of the Church defined justice as "a moral quality or habit which perfects the will and inclines it to render to each and to all what belongs to them."

Pagans and Christians, therefore, have always been in substantial agreement that justice is the virtue which renders to everyone his due.

But who shall determine what is due others? How shall he go about it? Is justice only for some or is it for all? These questions go to the very heart of the problem. Let us see how Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler applied the definition of justice.

For centuries the Russian people had submitted to despotism and oppression, to ruthlessness and exploitation. In 1917 they rose against autocracy and stepped forth into what they believed was to be a new era of justice, liberty and peace. But Lenin believed that no dictatorship of the proletariat was thinkable without terror and violence. Thus it happened that, immediately after the November Revolution, the Cheka was organized and empowered to arrest, try, and shoot all who were considered "dangerous." This was Lenin's conception of justice—the liquidation of all who disagreed with him.

Immediately after the first World War, the Italian people complained that they had given five and a half million soldiers to the cause of the Allies, of whom two and a half million had either been killed or wounded, and yet had failed to obtain one square inch of additional territory. A weak democratic government, having failed in foreign affairs, was equally unsuccessful in dealing with Communist revolutionaries at home. Six hundred factories were taken over by the workers. Land-hungry peasants sought to seize small holdings at the expense of the owners of large estates. By 1922, tired of violence and anarchy, the majority of Italians began to look to Mussolini to bring in an era of social justice. Fascism launched a successful counter-offensive against Communism; but the new regime soon demonstrated that it had many characteristics in common with Soviet despotism. Musso-

lini's conception of justice consisted in a declaration of war against anti-Fascists.

North of the Alps, Hitler exploited the German people's hatred of the Treaty of Versailles, their misery and suffering resulting from four years of economic depression, their fear of Communism, and their lack of confidence in parliamentary government. When he came to power in 1933, he also, as Lenin and Mussolini before him, inaugurated a reign of terror against those who preferred to do their own thinking. Nazi foreign policy emphasized the injustices that had been inflicted upon Germany in the post-war years and succeeded to the extent that Hitler was able to tear the Versailles Treaty into shreds. But he did not stop there. Still claiming to be smarting under the injustices of a democratic-capitalist-imperialist world order, he set in motion a ruthless program of conquest and destruction.

None of the three major revolutions of the twentieth century advanced the cause of justice one iota. In each case the masses were betrayed. Their hunger and thirst for justice were mocked and ridiculed. Those who resisted the onward march of the Soviet, Fascist and Nazi tyrannies, those who tried to defend the inalienable rights of man, were hunted down and destroyed.

A great many people believe that the defeat of Hitler and his allies would usher in a new era of justice in the world. But the problem is not so simple as that. The British, French and American democracies have themselves been guilty of barbarous injustices. According to Sir John Orr's survey in 1936, half the population of England was at that time suffering from permanent malnutrition. The average income of the people of India is just about enough to feed two men in every three of the population. Fifty-five per cent of the natives in Britain's Southern Rhodesia mines go down as casualties from disease caused by lack of food. White travelers in the French Africa empire have testi-

fied that the native population, victims of merciless exploitation, run away in terror at the very sight of a white man. Almost half the people in the United States are living below the minimum level of subsistence. Approximately a quarter of a million babies in this country were born last year without benefit of medical care. And too often American justice is the interest of the stronger written into law.

In the past, individuals, groups and nations have interpreted justice to suit their own selfish desires and ambitions. They have been interested in justice for themselves alone. In the future, however, if we are to realize a reign of justice, what is due others must be interpreted, not according to individual caprice, but according to objective Christian moral standards. Furthermore, justice must be granted to everybody, regardless of class, race or nationality.

This program of re-establishing Christian standards of justice, and then applying those standards impartially to all people everywhere, demands a radical change of attitude on the part of the majority of Christians. We may not have been personally guilty of injustice, but we have shamefully turned our backs upon the awful contemporary spectacle of man's inhumanity to man. By remaining silent when it was our Christian duty to speak out, and by a policy of inaction and indifference when it was our duty to take strong and effective action, we are as responsible for the world's tragedy as those who exploit the masses for the sake of their own selfish ambitions. We have been too self-centered, too willing to stay with our own kind, too club-like, too unconcerned about the rough and tumble majority. We are under condemnation for our own exclusiveness.

The old formulas for peace, simply re-worded to meet a new situation, have lost their savor. Norman Angell, for example, suggests that in the post-Hitler era, the British should say to the Germans: "We do not ask you to accept our dictation or domination, any more

than we should be prepared to accept yours. We ask you to accept the domination of a law or principle of international life by which we ourselves are prepared to abide. That law is that no nation, in its disputes with others, shall impose its partial and interested judgment by war, or threat of war and by using war to wipe out the national life of its neighbors. That we will oppose by all the aid to the victims of violence that we can give." But it should be clear, at this late hour, that wars cannot be prevented by mere platitudes. If Britain's promise to aid Poland and other European countries did not avert the current war, it is not likely that a similar British promise, twenty-five years from now, will avert either war or revolution.

For my part, I much prefer the realistic thinking of Pierre van Paassen who, in his *Days Of Our Years*, calls upon the Church to assume the leadership of those forces, however small and badly organized they may be at present, which are striving desperately to bring about a new era of peace based on justice—justice for the weak as well as for the strong, justice for the black man and the yellow man as well as for the white man, justice for labor as well as for capital, justice for the Jew as well as for the Gentile.

## Some Things New and Old

ICELAND CATHOLICS

### *Are there any Catholics in Iceland?*

Yes, there is a Catholic body in Iceland which, though small, is very vigorous. The latest statistics to hand (1938) show that in a population of about 109,000 there are 316 Catholics. But the St. Ansgar Scandinavian Catholic League states that the number of Catholics has increased in the last year or so.

The Church in Iceland is under the governance of a Vicar Apostolic, the Most Reverend Martin Meulenberg, S.M.M., titular Bishop of Holar. There are three parishes and stations on the island served by six priests who are members of the same religious order as their Bishop. In 1938 there were thirty-three Sisters and two religious Brothers working in Iceland. These Catholics maintain three hospitals, which are staffed by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambery.

One of Iceland's most distinguished Catholic sons is the Jesuit Father Jón Svensson, who was ordained to the priesthood in 1890. Father Svensson is known widely throughout the literary world as the author of the series of Nonni books, several novels written for young readers.

Iceland also has its own claims to the honors of the altars of the Catholic Church, for at one time there was a prospect that an Icelander would be raised to the altars. This was Bishop Gudmundur Arason, who was Bishop from A.D. 1203 to 1237, and who is still spoken of after all these centuries as "Gudmundur the Good." His Cause for Beatification was actually in progress, when the disaster of the Reformation fell upon Iceland, and the steps towards Canonization were held up. But in 1937 a fiesta in his honor was held by the Iceland Catholics at Reykjavik, the capital city.

#### FRANCE: ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE CHURCH

*Why is France called "Eldest Daughter of the Church"? Surely France is not the first country to accept Christianity?*

No, France was not the first country outside the Holy Land to receive the Faith, though there is a legend that Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, settled in the South of France where they introduced the Christian religion.

So while there is nothing in history to support the idea that France was the first country to be converted to the Faith, there is very direct evidence that a special honorific title was conferred on the King of the Franks by the Pope. When Clovis, King of the Franks, was baptized by Saint Remy, Archbishop of Rheims, on Christmas Day A.D. 496, the saint is said to have addressed the neophyte as "Eldest Son of the Church," and this title seems to have been kept exclusively to the Frankish kings, at least for some centuries. Later on it somehow was extended to the whole French nation, and this France came to be spoken of as the "Eldest Daughter of the Church."

Now it seems very certain that some of the Popes singled out the Franks and their kings for honor, as a reward for services rendered in behalf of the Church. Pope Stephen II about the year 752 wrote that the Franks and their king, Pepin, stood out before all nations in their duty and loyal faith to the Prince of the Apostles. Pope Paul I wrote in a letter to the Frankish king that the Franks were a holy nation, whose name and the name of their kings were increased on high, and whose reward should be great before God and His angels.

Of course Catholic France, in its missionary zeal, may very well be called the Eldest Daughter of the Church. But in the light of history, it would seem that the title was given to the king rather than to the entire nation.

#### PAPAL ROYAL HONORS

*The Popes, as I have read, in past centuries conferred special titles on European rulers. Is that so, and what were the titles thus conferred?*

The earliest Papal title, of which we have any reliable historical record, is that of Most Christian Majesty, which was a traditional title of the kings of France.

The French kings used the title at least from the end of the 14th century, and it was formally recognized by Pope Paul II in 1464.

Most Catholic Majesty is a traditional title of the kings of Spain. Pope Innocent VIII formally granted the title to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1491, as a recognition of their taking of the city of Granada and the expulsion of the Mohammedan Moors from Catholic Spain.

Fidei Defensor or Defender of the Faith, is an honorary title which Pope Leo X conferred on Henry VIII of England in 1521, in acknowledgment of his writing a defense of the Seven Sacraments (*Assertio septem sacramentorum*) against the teachings of Luther, whom Henry detested. Curiously enough, an Act of Parliament in 1543 made that title part of the style of the English Sovereigns, and today the British ruler is still styled Defender of the Faith, though he is officially a Protestant. A similar title was conferred by Pope Paul III (1534-1549) on King James V of Scotland.

The kings of Portugal enjoyed the style of Most Faithful Majesty until the overthrow of the Portuguese monarchy. This title was conferred on King John V in 1717 by Pope Clement XI, in recognition of Portugal's crusade against the Mohammedan Turks.

Then there is the title of Most Apostolic Majesty, which pertains to the kings of Hungary. After the foundation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the title was used by the Austrian Emperor as King of Hungary. The claim to this title was made in the sixteenth century, but it seems to have been first formally used by Leopold I, who died in 1705. Pope Clement XIII formally granted the title to the Empress Maria Theresa in 1758. The title of Most Apostolic Majesty is claimed today by the legitimist King of Hungary, better known in the United States as the Archduke Otto of Hapsburg.